

David B. Bingham, MD
50 White Birch Road
Salem, CT 06420
860-859-1247

dbbingham@sbcglobal.net

Testimony in support of an amendment to HB 5474

Mr. Chairman, members of the Committee:

My name is David Bingham. Our farm lies at the terminus of the incomplete Rt 11 in Salem. Perhaps you know my Ice Cream Barn at the corner on Rt 82.

For 35 years, people travelling through Salem as they drive between Hartford and New London have experienced road rage, delays and risk to their lives on the death trap that is Rt 85.

I have personally lost friends and neighbors on this road. Rt 85 cannot be adequately fixed. It needs to be bypassed by completing Rt 11, to separate local and through traffic in a busy corridor.

For 35 years, the people in southeast CT have pleaded in hearings and through their supportive representatives in the legislature for this road to be completed. The basic hearings have been done revealing huge public support. Promises from governors and the federal officials were obtained. Federal funding for the design and also for an accompanying bikeway and pedestrian trail has been appropriated, and simply awaits a state match. These are green jobs, waiting for a green light.

Town, regional and state plans of conservation and development all concur that completion of Rt 11 is necessary, appropriate and beneficial to expedite traffic flow through this corridor safely, while protecting the entire corridor from additional sprawl. A world class design with a broad greenway is planned to mitigate environmental impacts.

But funding to complete the studies and construct the road has to compete with other State priorities. We have come in too far back in line, due to enormous costs elsewhere in the State. But what if our region is willing to pay the State match by a local funding stream? That would leverage the federal funds available with no loss of State funds needed for other projects

We ask that the completion of Rt 11 be permitted to pay for itself through a modern toll system.

Amending HB 5474 to allow the road design for completion of Rt 11 to be accompanied by a toll will break the funding impasse. Moreover, it would free funds needed for other transportation priorities throughout the State. And since vehicle tolls tend to encourage alternative transport, such an approach will foster a more balanced transportation network for the future.

The current situation is intolerable. Having a new road project pay for itself through tolls has been the American way since colonial times. In fact my forbears collected a toll for the construction of the Hadlyme turnpike through our farm to cross the Eightmile River 200 years ago, by permission of the legislature.

Please amend this bill to allow progress again today, and set an example for others who wish to complete new projects elsewhere by encouraging them to pay as they go.

Thank you. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have about this project.

David Bingham, member, Salem Planning and Zoning Commission.